[illegible] FESTIVALS, [illegible]
[illegible] ASTRONOMICAL IDEAS OF [illegible]

Among savage tribes in America and other parts of the world [illegible] remnants [illegible] of traditions, which can be more or less vaguely traced all over the world.

CALENDARS AND ASTRONOMICAL IDEAS.

The existence in various parts of the world of vestiges of a primitive (or it might be called a pre-Adamite) calendar regulated by a cluster of stars in the neck of the constellation Taurus (the Bull) and designated by "the seven stars" viz Pleiades, was for the first time discovered in 1862. Its past existence is now accepted by all those astronomers who have enquired into it, viz: the Astronomer Royal for Scotland, Norman Lockyer, F. R. S. Professor Proctor, F. R. S., R. A. Proctor, Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society, and others.

The Pleiades, every where known as a cluster of seven stars, [illegible] though only apparently six in number, seem in remote ages to have regulated by their position in the heavens, the festivals and agricultural labours of the year, in some countries dividing the year into two equal divisions, sometimes into four, and occasionally into three.

The great annual festival among some savages takes place in November for three days, our All Hallowe'en, All Saints and All souls being fossil memorials of it on our calendar. The Pleiades then are visible all night long i. e. they rise at sunset, culminate or cross the Meridian (called "Anything," as they are then due South,) at midnight, and set at sunrise. In some places this festival takes place a little earlier, when these stars are first seen in the evening i. e. October. They continue visible at that time, rising however earlier and earlier and in February they culminate at sunset, and set at midnight; and about the first May they set at sunset and therefore become invisible. For 40 days their "*occultation*" takes place, they then reappear above the eastern horizon at early dawn. Hence in Polynesia the year is divided very generally into two seasons, "the Pleiades above," and "the Pleiades below;" the first is from May to November, when those stars are invisible in the twilight; and the second is from November to May when those stars continue visible at that time. Among some races these two divisions are transferred to February and August, when those stars culminate at sunset and sunrise respectively. There are two other times during which some races hold festivals, viz: when these stars reappear: and also in July, when the stars in the Belt of Orion and perhaps Sirius, almost in the same line, are all visible above the horizon at early morning.

Hence these dates are, 1st. in the middle of November, (or in October occasionally); 2nd. towards the end of February; 3rd. about May 1st or early in June. 4th. about the end of August or beginning of September (occasionally also in July.)

Qu. 1.—Do the tribes with whom you are acquainted know and observe the Pleiades, or do they regulate any festival by those stars?

2.—Do any of their festivals take place at the times named by me, and what are these festivals, when their rites and modes of observance.

3.—What is the name of the Pleiades in the Indian dialect and what does it mean?

4.—What is the name of the festival, (if any), regulated by them, its name in Indian, and its meaning or origin?

5.—Also the name of *Sirius*, the three stars in the belt of *Orion*, the five stars in the head of Taurus, (the Hyades)?

FESTIVALS.

B.—A Feast of the Dead in commemoration of ancestors and deceased relatives, very generally takes place at the time of new years festival. It lasts three days and is generally held at night, beginning at sunset. It is sometimes also a sort of thanksgiving or harvest home; and the new fire is then kindled. Among some American races there is such a festival held every 5 or 6 years, and regulated by the Pleiades. The dead are removed then to the tribal burial place, and those already buried there are taken up and wrapped in fresh furs.

These feasts are accompanied by ban fires, games and sham fights.

Qu.—Have you found any traces of this annual feast of the dead; if so what is its name, and what does it signify; when does the feast begin, how long does it last, how is it observed and how is its time of observance regulated?

?.—Does the festival of the dead also take place among these Indians at longer intervals than a year? If so, is it regulated by the Pleiades and how. Give also its Indian name and if possible its meaning. Is their festival strictly tribal, and confined to kindred races?

WOMAN'S FESTIVAL.

It is said that there is a peculiar festival, traceable among some tribes, called "the Woman's Festival." The warriors assemble in two converging lines forming a V. At the angle of the V a [illegible] that is without a mark against her, passes up the line and receives a present.

No woman who has been guilty of an indiscretion dare approach, as any warrior who knows it, is bound to shoot her.

There is also a festival (perhaps the same as foregoing) at which women, on entering men, kiss them, and compel them to give a present as a forfeit.

Q. Do you know of either of these, and when they are observed and what are their names and origin.

PERIODS OR AGES.

Among the Blackfeet (and probably among other tribes) are traces of a belief of the Toltecs of Mexico, and of Asiatic Nations, that the world has passed through three ages or Suns, called Nepas. These lasted of course thousand of years, a great prophet called a Nepa, having lived through each. The third Nepa was buried in the Blackfeet country. We are now in the fourth Nepah.

Qu.—Have you found any traces of this. If so give particulars as fully as possible, and if possible, the meaning of what names you supply.

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RELIGIOUS IDEAS CONNECTED WITH THE FORM AND POSITION OF THE PLEIADES.

When the Pleiades are on the meridian i. e, directly south from us, a line drawn from the ship Argo (or the ark) on the southern horizon to a point overhead (or "the zenith,") passes through, or near, almost all the stars most noted by the ancients and by savages—near Sirius or the Dog Star, (the brightest in the heavens,) thence through the three stars in the Belt of Orion, which seem to point upward to the Pleiades, thence through the five stars in the head of the bull, (the Hyades, one of which is the brilliant Aldebaran, the eye of the bull) and thence through "the *seven* stars," the Pleiades, to the Zenith.

The stars in the head of the bull (Hyades,) form an angle or a triangle, and when they are three hours above the horizon, seem five in number. When they are on the Meridian we can distinguish a larger number of stars composing it.

The mystic numbers 3, 5 and 7, which are so prominent in all ancient religious (that of the Hebrews includes) and among modern savages, are probably derived from these stars.

We still believe that "there is luck in odd numbers."

10.—Have you found these numbers to be venerated, and are they associated with these stars?

11.—Is the triangle a sacred symbol, and is it connected with the triangle formed by the stars in the head of Taurus, and what are its name and meaning? Are all the stars I have named observed by the Indians, and what are they called.

The form of the Pleiades seems to have (in a very rude and imperfect way) suggested many symbols, in primitive ages, the idea of a man with arms extended, a cross, a bird with wings extended, a tree or bough; and as they are setting they resemble a tree lying prostrate, and also suggest the shape of the "fire stick," with which fire was kindled.

13.—Do your Indians attach any such ideas to those stars?

RELIGIOUS IDEAS CONNECTED WITH THE PLEIADES.

Some tribes believe that their great Father ("their grandfather," who is their Creator), resides in the Pleiades, and that his form can be seen in the shape of these and of some adjoining stars. Among some Californian tribes it is sacilege to even look at the Pleiades.

14.—Have you any trace of this belief among your Indians.

When those stars disappear, many tribes believe that their "grand father" is sick, and has died, and they lament his departure; and when thes stars re appear, they rejoice that he has risen again to light and life.

15.—Have you found any traces of this?

Some tribes believe that their Grand father in the Pleiades made men out of the trunk of a tree, which he found *in the West*. At first they had their limbs misplaced, one member being placed in the centre of the forehead. This Great Medicin man remedied their defects, and placed them in the tree again, and they came forth well formed men and women.

16—Is there any trace of this "tree of Life," or of this story of an imperfect creation?

The Great father then taught the men and the women the rude arts of savage life adapted to their sexes, and gave them all that they now knew or possess, and returned to the Pleiades where he may still be seen in the sky.

17.—Has this tradition been found by you?

PARADISE IN THE PLEIADES.

The Indians of N. A. generally believe that the Pleiades are "the *seven dancers*," seven youths caught up to the stars, while holding a sacred dance, which they now keep up forever in the skies.

Among some tribes, such as the Blackfeet, each of these "seven dancers" is called by the name of a bird, the crow, the partridge, &c.

18.—Are there traces of this, and what are the names given to the dancers, and is this celestial dance imitated in the sacred dances of the Indians, and *when*, and in what manner? If so please be very minute as to number of dancers, and all the smallest details of time and place of observance of any such dance.

The Greeks called the Pleiades "the dancers;" hence Milton says "and the Pleiades before him danced, shedding sweet influences."

The Australians believe that the three stars in the Belt of Orion are three medicine men holding a corroborree or sacred dance, and that the Pleiades are seven women in the skies beating time for the dancers by clapping their hands.

19.—Are there any such ideas connected with the three stars in question among your Indians?

ISLANDS OF THE BLESSED.

Among some races the upper sky is supposed to be an ocean, in which the stars are floating. The Pleiades are by some regarded as an island to which the spirits of the dead go; and this Paradise is where the Pleiades set, in the North West—Sometimes this island is seven islands, and sometimes ten. (7 & 3)

20.—Have you found any trace of this, and if so, is their paradise in the *North West*.

CLIMBING UP TO HEAVEN.

Among some races there is a tradition of an ancestor climbing up by a tree to "the Land of the Pleiades," and being instructed on the arts of savage life, which he taught mankind on his return; sometimes it is from a high mountain that their ancestor reached Paradise.

21.—Have you found any traces of this?

THE GIVER OF RAIN AND OF THUNDER, AND HIS COMPANIONS.

Among some races it is believed that their grandfather in the Pleiade is the giver of rain and causes thunder, and makes the earth fruitful.

There are also three damsels, the spirits of the squash, the bean, and the maize, who are called "our life" "our supporters." They gave these gifts to men; and are clad in the leaves and

flowers of there plants. They closely resemble the Three Graces—and are supposed to *reside in the Pleiades.* "The Thunderer" has also three male "assistants" who are his ministers.

22. Have you found any traces of these ideas?

The Great Father in the Pleiades is supposed to assume the form of a huge bird, an eagle, or condor, or white owl, which is called "the thunder bird."

23. Have you met with this idea?

THE CROSS, THE TRIANGLE, AND THE SEVEN STARS.

Among almost all savages the cross (either the greek cross +, or the tau cross, T) is a sacred symbol, and is apparently connected with the Pleiades, and with rain, also with healing, as a talisman. Many tribes mark objects with a red cross, their clothes, or houses, or canoes. Sometimes this symbol of healing is a staff, or perhaps the rattle of the medicine man.

24.—Is there any trace of this prehistoric cross, or of this staff among your tribes, and do they connect them with the Pleiades, or with rain, or the gift of corn to man, or with healing?

Have they any symbol like the triangle, and is it connected with the Deity, or with the 5 stars in the head of Taurus. Are seven stars a symbol or ornament among them?

INITIATIONS AND MEDICINE MEN.

There is reason to believe that among some tribes at the initiation of young warriors, they believe that the Pleiades lend them strength, and endurance in their ordeal, and come to tell them *in dreams* what their *totem* shall be, and what their new name shall be?

25.—Are there any trace of these ideas? How many stages of initiation are there? Among most savages there are *three.*

26.—Are the medicine men initiated, and how many stages of such initiation are there?

Do the medicine men connect their ordeals in any way with the great medicine man in the Pleiades, or with the Nos. 3, 5 or 7?

If this is the case, it may be difficult to get them to tell you anything on this point, unless they are pressed closely. Have any tribes known to you any passes or signs only known to the initiated?

In constructing the wigwam of the medicine man among some Canadian Indians the bark of *seven* different trees is used. Among the Florida Indians the inner bark of seven different trees is used as fuel for lighting the sacred fire—as in India in the rites of *Agni* the words are used "fire! *seven* are thy fuels, *seven* are thy tongues, *seven* are thy sages, *seven* ways do *seven* worship thee, &c."

Among some Canadian tribes the vapour bath is heated with seven stones.

27.—Have you found among your Indians any traces of these ideas?

There is a species of divination by a drum, in beating which the medicine men use words of which they do not understand the meaning.

28.—Have you met with this?

REPLIES.

Please keep these querries, and send (by post _____

if possible in one month from receipt, such replies as you are able to supply, numbering each according to the number of the questions to which it refers.

~~By the 1st of November,~~ it is possible further information may be obtained by you, which could be forwarded in the same manner. The fullest particulars will be acceptable, for even though apparent trifles may seem unworthy of attention, they become of importance when traced in many countries and among various races. Any information akin to that asked for, though not included in these queries, would be much valued, and will be duly acknowledged, should they be used in any work bearing on the customs and traditions of our Indians.

For Answers see, Mss. E. 215.1 J. W. McKay.